

# Nutrition Tips to Cut Your Cancer Risk

March is National Nutrition Month, so let's talk about some cancer-fighting benefits of making healthy food choices. What you eat and what you don't eat has a powerful effect on your health. Maintaining a healthy weight and nourishing your body with certain foods is key to good health and to reducing your risk of cancer.

March is also Colon Cancer Awareness Month, an observance dedicated to encouraging patients, survivors, and caregivers to share their stories, advocate for colorectal cancer prevention, and inform others about the importance of early detection. Dark blue ribbons and clothes are worn throughout March to spark curiosity and start a conversation about colon cancer awareness. It is the second deadliest cancer.

## Uncontrollable Risk factors include:

- Age (Seeing cases in ages 45 and over) with sharp rises in cases of younger adults every year, screening age is typically 50.
- A family history of colorectal polyps/cancer
- An inflammatory bowel disease such as Crohn's or ulcerative colitis
- Type 2 diabetes

## Controllable Risk factors include:

- Being overweight or obese
- Smoking
- Physical inactivity
- Heavy alcohol use
- High red meat consumption/Poor food choices

Regular screenings aren't the only way to prevent colorectal cancer. There are lifestyle changes you can make today to prioritize your colon health and prevent cancer. There is strong evidence to suggest that the following diet and exercise adjustments can significantly reduce your risk of colorectal cancer:

- Adding more whole grains to your diet (3 servings per day)
- Cutting back on red meat, such as beef and pork
- Reducing your alcohol intake
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Engaging in regular exercise

Although there's no one diet program that is right for everyone, it's important to have some sort of healthy-eating plan.

So, put your best fork forward with five cancer-fighting strategies.

### 1. Know your healthy weight & maintain it

People who are overweight or obese have a higher risk of many serious health conditions, including cancers. To control weight gain, it's about knowing what weight is healthy for you and maintaining that weight. (No, a few pounds here or there shouldn't lead to crazy dieting, but knowing yourself and your ideal body weight is key.)

Maintaining a healthy weight throughout life can lower your risk of breast, uterine, prostate, lung, colon, kidney, pancreatic, esophageal, multiple myeloma, gallbladder, gastric, ovarian and thyroid cancers.



### 2. Replace one processed item a day with real food

Processed foods aren't just microwavable meals – the term 'processed food' applies to foods that have been altered from their natural state in some way (and it can be for a variety of reasons, including safety, appearance factor, and convenience).

Ingredients such as salt, sugar and fat are often added to processed foods, which leads to the consumption of these additives at more than the recommended amount.

**Simple swaps can make a difference in how you look and feel - and can also help lower your risk of cancer.**

- Grab an apple or an orange instead of cookies.
- Substitute cucumbers and baby carrots for crackers. (Dip them hummus for a tasty treat!)
- Replace soda with a glass of water or sparkling water. Water helps your body get rid of toxins that put you at risk for diseases like cancer.



***(Bonus tip – the perimeter of the supermarket usually contains natural foods and the center aisles contain processed foods... so stay on the border to stay healthier.)***

### 3. Add superfoods to your diet

Superfoods are nutrient powerhouses that contain large doses of cancer-fighting antioxidants, vitamins and minerals.

- Add dark green veggies like spinach, broccoli and kale to your salads and omelets.
- Snack on a handful of raw almonds or roasted pumpkin seeds instead of a bag of chips.



#### 4. Limit red and processed meats

Research shows that people who eat more red meat (beef, pork and lamb) and processed meats (like bacon, sausage, hot dogs and salami) have a higher risk of developing colorectal and prostate cancers. Although there is not scientific consensus, the observed increased risk is often explained by the high iron and fat content in red meat and/or the salt and nitrates in processed meat. **Additionally, cooking meats at a very high temperature can create chemicals on your food that may increase your cancer risk.**



Red meat alternatives: 100g of cooked fish/2 large eggs/1 cup of beans (lentils, chickpeas, split peas, dried or canned beans)/30 grams of nuts like peanuts/almonds/170 grams tofu

#### 5. Reduce your alcohol intake

Although moderate alcohol use has possible health benefits, it's also not risk-free. Excessive use can cause liver damage, heart problems and even cancer.

To reduce your lifetime risk of cancer:  
Recommendation: Men should not consume more than 2 drinks per day and women should not consume more than 3 drinks per week.

